# Cluster Managers

As a cluster manager, you can see first-hand the impact of digital transformation on businesses located in your cluster. You can encourage **strong collaboration between firms in the cluster** and engaging actors in the design of the digital transformation strategy of your members.

### *Be the strategic voice of the members of your cluster*

Down through the years, cluster managers have gained a great understanding of their members' **needs, ambitions, and requirements**. Thus, they are well-positioned to inform local stakeholders about the strengths and needs of the businesses in the cluster.

To have a clear impact, cluster managers should take any opportunity to represent the cluster's members. They should engage in leadership gatherings, events and set up specific meetings to promote their members.

Regular meetings with other clusters and local businesses and interact with financial institutions should occur. They can also deploy efforts in increasing the visibility of the cluster and its members in international markets by establishing robust partnerships with clusters outside of their region.

### *Creating collaboration opportunities for added value, trust and knowledge sharing*

Cluster managers can establish and promote collaboration between the members of the cluster and other stakeholders by organising networking activities or research projects**. Creating trust between the tripe-helix actors is key to the future success of the cluster and its members**. They can also foster knowledge sharing activities between members by providing spaces for people to meet, such as virtual open spaces to ensure strong relationship building takes place.

### *Digital skills of businesses*

As the growth of digital technologies presents opportunities, but also threats for businesses, **cluster managers need to ensure that the businesses in the cluster are well-equipped to fully grasp the benefits of the new modern digital era**. They first have to assess the digital skills needs of the businesses in the cluster through an assessment process to comprehend the current and future digital readiness of its members. This is particularly important given the numerous studies highlighting the lack of specific digital skills and expertise in many European firms. SMEs (<50 employees) and micro enterprise (<10 employees) are particularly in need of this activity and support from the cluster as they may lack the resources and capabilities to conduct this digital study.

Considering the specific requirements of the businesses in the cluster, cluster managers need to develop appropriate training activities and courses to enhance their know-how. To maximise the impact of these activities and courses, cluster managers should ideally collaborate with the wider triple-helix community encompassing**: institutes and universities, regional skills managers, research centres, other clusters and European Digital Innovation Hubs and government bodies** with a successful track record in providing transformative smart digital education programmes.

### *Enabling co-opetition between industry and education*

Cluster managers should play an important role in facilitating **cross-collaboration between businesses and the education environment**. They can inform the businesses in the cluster about collaboration opportunities with local universities and other institutes to enhance their R&D practices. Thus, new understandings, access to greater networks and markets and novel business solutions can transpire. They can also encourage students, research institutes and HEIs to engage with the businesses of the cluster.

Not only will this help empower companies to take control of their digital change, but it will also encourage the development of innovative digital technologies adapted to the business reality.

### Taking the lead in promoting digital transformation and Industry 4.0

Cluster managers can play an important role in creating an environment that facilitates the use of digital technologies. They can stimulate the establishment of open data platforms within, but also outside of the cluster.

They can also collaborate with local firms, and especially local digital services providers, to discover the new opportunities offered by smart solutions. Cluster managers should also **enhance the uptake of digital technologies within industry**. What does digital mean for your business and how should it look should form a key part of how the cluster manager communicates and delivers competitiveness and productivity impact with the members of the cluster.

### Digital technologies and advanced manufacturing in Ireland

The Irish digital technology sector is thriving with annual sales of over €6.5 billion with more than 1,000 companies operating across a wide number of industries. The manufacturing sector in Ireland **employs 205,700 people directly and 400,000 people** across all skills levels. More than 80% of companies have said that automaton of manufacturing was critical to their future success with robotics, AI & data analytics, additive manufacturing and 3D printing IN4.0 digital technologies being implemented.

### Encouraging internationalisation

The potential of the digital economy can only be realised if the appropriate infrastructure is in place. Cluster managers can play a big part in acting as a focal contact point and represent the members of the cluster in discussions related to infrastructure investments. In particular, they can play a key role in looking for public funding at the local, regional, national and EU level to finance the required digital infrastructure.

They are the ones who are aware of EU funding opportunities (i.e. **I4MS, Change2Twin, COSME, Horizon Europe, Erasmus for young entrepreneurs scheme,** etc.) Furthermore, they can help develop partnerships with local investors to unlock investments in digital infrastructure.

### IDEAM Cluster Journey

Industry must be at the pinnacle of what the cluster is trying to achieve with the backing of the three pillars - **industry, academia and government**. IDEAM will add to the eco-system for manufacturing and ICT companies in the mid-west region. The IDEAM (Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing) Cluster is designed to assist Manufacturing SMEs in all aspects of digital transformation and Industry 4.0.

### Get Involved!

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